UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General warns United Nations is bankrupt and urgent action is needed; says excessive dependence on assessments from one Member State is unhealthy.

* Serbs expel Croats from Banja Luka in retaliation for recent exodus from Krajina; UNHCR fears for up to 30,000 Muslims still in northern Bosnia.

* Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council reports successful re-run of first round of national elections.

* Special Representative for Angola meets with President dos Santos for briefing on recent progress in peace process.

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The United Nations is bankrupt and the situation requires urgent attention, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Writing in Sunday's Washington Post, he said the Organization's cash resources did not meet either current needs or current obligations. As of the end of May, Member States owed $2.754 billion in unpaid assessments. The United States -- the largest debtor -- owed $1.179 billion.

Excessive dependence on the assessments from a single Member State was unhealthy for the United Nations, the Secretary-General stressed. The current financial situation reflected the low priority given to the Organization among the political and budgetary priorities of Member States. "A more even distribution of assessments among countries with the capacity to pay would be in the best interests of the Organization and the international community as a whole", he continued. "It should be undertaken without delay."

The Secretary-General said a simpler, more focused and more integrated United Nations was needed to better pursue the major tasks of peace-keeping, human rights, humanitarian assistance and development. He outlined reforms that were already being implemented: cutting bureaucracy and reducing the number of Secretariat posts by 135; controlling spending and achieving efficiency gains; increasing oversight and inspection; dealing with abuses such as financial wrongdoing; and improving operations in the economic and social sectors.

(more)

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Ethnic Croats are being expelled from Serb-controlled territory in Bosnia and Herzegovina in retaliation for the recent displacement of Krajina Serbs from Croatia, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Some 600 Bosnian Croats were forced out of Banja Luka today, and were expected to cross the Sava River into Croatia. Around 12,000 Croats remain in the Banja Luka region, which has suffered severe ethnic cleansing at the hands of the Serbs. The agency fears that the backlash will soon focus on up to 30,000 Muslims still in the region.

Meanwhile, the UNHCR has been assisting tens of thousands of Krajina Serb refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), with airlifts and road convoys. Deputy High Commissioner Gerald Walzer said he was shocked at the magnitude of the crisis and the suffering of the people. He added that more help was needed for refugees still on the road from northern Bosnia to Serbia.

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Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council reported that polling went smoothly in yesterday's re-run of the first round of national elections. Voters in 21 of the country's 133 communes had another chance to vote, but the turn-out was low. All polling places were functioning fully by 8:30 a.m. and there were few technical problems. The United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) assisted with security and there were no significant incidents.

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Special Representative Alioune Blondin Beye met today with the President of Angola, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, for a briefing on the President's recent meeting in Gabon with the leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Jonas Savimbi. Mr. Beye will meet with Dr. Savimbi later in the week.

At the meeting in Gabon, it was agreed that one of the two vice-presidential positions in the Angolan Government would go to UNITA. It was expected that Dr. Savimbi would be named by UNITA to fill the post. However, the Angolan leaders did not reach full agreement on modalities for integrating UNITA into the Angolan armed forces, and talks were expected to resume at the military level.

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